

TRINITY RIVER BRIDGES PROJECT EA-FONSI/FINAL EIR

FONSI

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA OFFICE
TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM

And

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
REDDING FIELD OFFICE
REDDING, CALIFORNIA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**FOR COMPLETION OF THE TRINITY RIVER BRIDGES PROJECT, TO MODIFY OR
REPLACE, AS NECESSARY, THE EXISTING SALT FLAT, BUCKTAIL, POKER BAR, AND
BIGGERS ROAD BRIDGES ACROSS THE TRINITY RIVER**

TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM, WEAVERVILLE, CALIFORNIA

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Recommended: _____ Date: _____
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Approved: _____ Date: _____
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FONSI No. TR0103

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, REDDING FIELD OFFICE

Recommended by: _____ Date: _____
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Field Office Manager

FONSI No. CA-360-RE-2003-50

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In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, and with the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), the Trinity River Restoration Program Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the Bureau of Land Management Redding Field Office (BLM) have found that the proposed action and alternatives (described in the attached Trinity River Bridges Project Environmental Assessment/Final Environmental Impact Report (EA/FEIR)) will result in no significant impacts on the human environment. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

BACKGROUND

The Trinity River Mainstem Fishery Restoration Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (FEIS/EIR) (2000) identified four bridges that were susceptible to impacts associated with peak fishery flow releases, the Salt Flat, Bucktail, Poker Bar, and Biggers Road bridges. Adverse impacts to these bridges by flood flows, including overtopping, flooded approaches and scouring, have occurred as recently as 1997, when these bridges and/or their approaches were rendered inaccessible by flood flows that severely limited residential and commercial use of these facilities for several days. The Trinity River Bridges Project EA/FEIR addresses the environmental issues, of the proposed action and their alternatives, and impacts associated with modification and/or replacement of these four bridges on the Trinity River, below Lewiston Dam (Project). Reclamation, the BLM, and Trinity County (County) prepared this EA/FEIR. Reclamation will be responsible for construction of the proposed project and will function as the federal lead agency under NEPA. BLM will serve as a federal co-lead agency since it administers the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for this reach of the Trinity River and because it will have approval authority for project activities on public lands at the Salt Flat and Bucktail sites. Trinity County will be providing funds made available through the California Department of Fish and Game's (CDFG) Coastal Salmon Recovery Program for construction of the Salt Flat and Biggers Road bridges.

The need for the proposed action results from:

- The existing high likelihood of flooding (pre-Trinity ROD) of the four bridges and/or their access roads with potential loss of property and lives (as exemplified during the 1997 New Year's Day Flood).
- The current limitation on the operation of Trinity Dam during periods of high inflows, which limits safety of dam water releases to the Trinity River via Lewiston Dam to 6,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) when the actual release capacity of the Trinity Dam is 13,750 cfs.
- Requirements in the Secretary of Interior's December 19, 2000, Trinity River ROD to restore the Trinity River fishery through a combination of higher releases from Lewiston Dam (up to 11,000 cfs), floodplain infrastructure improvements – including rebuilding or fortifying bridges and addressing other structures affected by the peak instream flows provided by the ROD, channel rehabilitation projects, fine and coarse sediment management, watershed restoration, and an Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management Program.
- The directive of the United States District Court of the Eastern District of California, in *Westlands Water District, et al., v. U.S. Department of the Interior, et al.* (Civil Action CIV – F – 00-7124-OWW/DLB) (E.D. Cal.) requiring that “[a]ll non-flow measures prescribed by the ROD shall proceed” while the Department of Interior prepares a SEIS to remedy the defects in the original EIS prepared for the December 19, 2000, ROD.

At each bridge site a minimum of three alternatives were considered, the Proposed Action, No-Action, and Alternative One. Under NEPA, no significant impacts were determined under any of these scenarios. Details concerning the Proposed Action and Alternatives considered but not selected are included within the EA/EIR. A brief summary of the Proposed Actions and their impacts is included below and in the Executive Summary of the EA/Draft EIR.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Salt Flat: The proposed action bridge at Salt Flat will be constructed approximately four to 44 feet downstream (centerline to centerline) of the existing left and right bridge abutments, respectively. The bridge will be constructed on private property, and will be owned collectively by the Salt Flat property owners. The bridge type is a two-span prefabricated steel truss with reinforced concrete deck. The bridge will be approximately 280 feet long (two 140-foot spans), with an 18-foot clear roadway width, designed to carry HS20 loading. The superstructure and guardrail will be fabricated with weathering steel. The proposed action requires raising the left road approach approximately four feet to provide sufficient hydraulic freeboard over the river.

Bucktail: The proposed action for the Bucktail Bridge consists of raising the west approach roadway and replacing the existing 30-inch diameter culvert with a 9-foot wide by 4-foot high arch structure. The arch culvert design will include a natural “bottom” and will increase the conveyance of flows under the Browns Mountain Road embankment. The design also includes raising the Browns Mountain roadway profile approximately 4.5 feet. The proposed roadway embankment and culvert will exhibit hydraulic characteristics similar to the existing system but will be overtopped only during extreme high flows greater than the 100 year event.

Poker Bar: The proposed Poker Bar bridges will be constructed approximately 33 feet upstream and parallel to the existing bridges. The bridges will remain on private property, and upon completion of construction will be the property of the Poker Bar Property Owners Association – East. The proposed bridge types are single span prefabricated steel trusses with reinforced concrete decks. The portion of road between the two bridges and the approaches will have a 20-foot clear roadway width and will be paved with asphalt concrete.

Biggers Road: The proposed Biggers Road Bridge will be constructed approximately 137 feet upstream of and parallel to the existing bridge. The bridge will remain on private property and will be owned collectively by homeowners of the “Treadwell Subdivision”. The proposed bridge type is a two-span prefabricated steel truss with reinforced concrete deck. The proposed bridge will be designed for overtopping on the left (east) side, near the intersection of the bridge and Steel Bridge Road. A turnout area will be provided near the south end of the left abutment, parallel to Steel Bridge Road, to allow vehicles to enter and exit.

More detailed project descriptions are included in chapter 2 of the Trinity River Bridges EA/EIR and in the “Description of Proposed Actions and Project Alternatives” section of the Executive Summary.

FINDINGS

The effect of the Proposed Action and Alternatives were evaluated in the EA/FEIR with respect to their impacts in the following issue areas: land use; geomorphic environment; water resources; water quality; fishery resources; vegetation, wildlife, and wetlands; recreation; socioeconomics, population, and housing; tribal trust; cultural resources; air quality; environmental justice; aesthetics; hazardous and hazardous materials; noise; public services and utilities/energy; and transportation /traffic circulation. Based upon the following summary of “Proposed Action” implementation effects (as discussed fully in the EA/FEIR), accomplishment of the Proposed Action at each bridge site, would result in no significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. Mitigation measures at each bridge site are detailed in the EA/FEIR.

Land Use

Salt Flat: Land use impacts resulting from the Proposed Action are limited to the relocation of a well located near the western (right) abutment and the potential need to relocate a portion of the service lines along Salt Flat Road.

Bucktail: Increasing the elevation of the western road approach under the Proposed Action would result in the loss of unimproved parking used by the public to access the river. An alternative parking area will be designed to replace this loss of unofficial parking by utilizing adjacent BLM lands or new road shoulders.

Geology, Fluvial Geomorphology, and Soils

Construction activities and disturbance would increase the potential for wind and water erosion, particularly if any soils were left exposed during the later winter and early spring periods of high precipitation. Erosion and sediment control measures will be implemented for all action alternatives. Implementation of the proposed action at each site is consistent with the ten Trinity River healthy river attributes, which are supported for implementation by the Trinity River Restoration Program.

Water Resources

The existing bridges at Salt Flat, Bucktail, Poker Bar, and Biggers Road all currently obstruct Trinity River flood flows due to: (1) the constructed piers and abutments located within the flood channel; (2) the reforming of the upstream channel during construction to accommodate approach roads and improve bridge hydraulics, and; (3) in some cases the superstructure itself blocking flows which are too high to pass beneath the bridge unobstructed. Implementation of the proposed action at each site is expected to cause the water surface elevation during flood conditions to decrease slightly.

Salt Flat: At Salt Flat, construction of the right abutment and the single column bent is planned for completion within the active low-flow channel during the fall and winter of 2003-2004 (outside of the June 15 to September 15 dry season in-river construction period). All temporary facilities placed within the river channel will be removed from the floodplain, as necessary, prior to the onset of the flooding and will return as required to complete work within the specified fall and winter 2003 time-frame.

Water Quality

Construction of any of the proposed bridges would temporarily increase turbidity and total suspended solids in the water column, could potentially result in a spill of hazardous materials (i.e., oil, grease, gasoline, or solvents) into the Trinity River, and could temporarily degrade a municipal or domestic water supply. Construction activities will be staged to minimize potential water quality effects, and appropriate measures to minimize impacts to water quality will be implemented.

Fisheries Resources

Benefits of the proposed action to fisheries include: 1) A reduction in the number of bridge supports located within the ordinary high water channel which increases available riverine habitat; 2) Removal of existing bridges will reduce channel constraints and increased hydraulic velocities that can impair fish passage during high river flows; 3) Where in-stream work is proposed, mitigation and conservation measures incorporated into the projects minimize or avoid direct impacts to rearing coho salmon and riverine habitats (e.g., installation of anti-spawning mats eliminates use of in-river work area by spawning fish); and 4) Replacement of bridges will improve the ability for the Trinity River Division of the Central Valley Project to provide fish habitat restoration flows that would improve potential to recover depressed Trinity River salmonid stocks.

A Biological Assessment/Essential Fish Habitat Assessment was prepared to determine to what extent the proposed action might affect the federally- and state-threatened Southern Oregon/Northern California Coasts (SONCC) Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) coho salmon or their designated critical habitat. Reclamation determined that project implementation was likely to adversely affect the SONCC coho salmon but that adverse effects were localized and temporary in nature. Furthermore, short-term negative construction effects would be more than compensated by the long-term benefits that would accrue thorough implementation of the proposed action. Coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), which administers the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for anadromous fishes, has occurred throughout the project and their recommendations for minimizing and mitigating aquatic impacts

have been incorporated into all construction planning. ESA Consultation with the NMFS will be completed when a Biological Opinion for the proposed project is received.

Vegetation, Wildlife, and Wetlands

The action has the potential to temporarily impact wildlife in the area but mitigation measures to reduce impacts (e.g., timing of work, pre-project surveys and removal of species of concern, and post-project replacement of riparian vegetation) will result in no significant long-term effects.

Informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) concerning effects to ESA listed terrestrial species, such as the northern spotted owl, was conducted by Reclamation. In owl habitat surveys near the bridges, no suitable habitat for nesting, roosting, or foraging northern spotted owls was located. In addition, no northern spotted owls were located during six visits and protocol surveys conducted in the spring/summer of 2002. The Service determined that a biological assessment was not required since the proposed project would not adversely affect northern spotted owls.

Recreation

Though implementation of the proposed actions would incur temporary impacts to recreation (e.g., heavy equipment activity and construction vehicle traffic within and directly adjacent to the Trinity River), long-term recreational safety benefits (i.e., fewer piers in the river channel, increased bridge deck elevation) would be realized.

Socioeconomics, Population, and Housing

The project could directly generate short-term income growth through the payment of wages and salaries, but would result in little increased long-term economic activity. A short-term increase in the demand for housing in the County could occur as a result of construction workers seeking lodging during the construction period.

Tribal Trust

The need to restore and maintain the natural production of anadromous fish in the Trinity River mainstem originates partly from the federal government's trust responsibility to protect the fishery resources of the region's Indian tribes. Construction-related impacts to tribal trust resources are expected to be short-term and outweighed by the overall benefits to these tribal trust resources through implementation of the Trinity River Restoration Program.

Cultural Resources

No cultural resource sites were identified within the project Area of Potential Effect (APE), and potential archaeological resources have not been observed or recorded within the project APE. Prior to initiation of construction or ground-disturbing activities, all construction workers shall be alerted to the possibility of buried cultural remains. Upon discovery of buried cultural materials or human remains, work within 50 feet of the find shall be halted and the proper agency contacted.

Air Quality

Construction associated with the proposed Project requires the use of construction equipment that temporarily contributes to air pollution in the Trinity River Basin area in the form of ozone precursors and particulate matter (PM₁₀). Reclamation will include provisions in the construction bid documents that the contractor will implement a dust control program to limit fugitive dust and PM₁₀ emissions.

Environmental Justice

There is no evidence to suggest that this project would cause a disproportionately high, adverse human health or environmental effect on minority and low-income populations, compared to other residents in the project corridor[s] and other Trinity County residents.

Aesthetics

Construction could result in long-term visual impacts to key viewing areas; specifically, views from adjacent residences will change based on the location of proposed structures, however, the overall replacement of these bridges will not significantly impact the aesthetic qualities of the surrounding area.

Public Services and Utilities / Energy

Construction work and temporary road closures will be staged in a manner that will allow for emergency service provider access. In the event that road/bridge closures would be required during the school year (mid-August through mid-June) these closures will only occur during non-peak hours.

Transportation / Traffic Circulation

The use of heavy construction equipment to transport material to and from the project work site could affect local road conditions on the designated haul routes by increasing the rate of road wear. Pre- and post-construction surveys shall be performed to determine existing roadway conditions and if any damage has occurred during construction.

SUMMARY

The proposed project, with all mitigation measures in place, will benefit, rather than adversely affect, geology, fluvial geomorphology, and soils, water quality, fishery resources, vegetation, wildlife, and wetlands, recreation, tribal trust assets, and traffic/transportation. Completion of the Trinity River Bridges Project, as planned, will contribute to long-term environmental quality of the Trinity River ecosystem.